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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 STATE 092527

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TAGS: [KCFE](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: CFE: A/S GOTTEMOELLER'S INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH
DIRECTOR ANTONOV ON SEPTEMBER 3

Classified By: Richard Davis, Office Director, VCI/CCA, for
reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: An extended "informal" discussion of CFE Treaty issues between VCI Assistant Secretary Rose Gottemoeller and Russian Disarmament Director Anatoliy Antonov in Geneva September 3 revealed some common ground regarding basic concepts for potential provisional application, trial implementation, and ratification of Adapted CFE, but also highlighted Russia's determination to eliminate the flank limits as they apply to Russia. Gottemoeller outlined new, informal U.S. ideas on the possibility of a timeline for ratification and trial implementation of Adapted CFE; the Russian side suggested conditions under which they thought provisional application of Adapted CFE should be possible. But these areas of common concern and mutual brainstorming were eclipsed in the meeting by Antonov's message on the flank. He said unambiguously that a CFE "package deal" that created the conditions for ratification of Adapted CFE by all Treaty parties would have to eliminate the flank limits for Russia, in order to be acceptable in Moscow. Gottemoeller stressed the importance of the flank regime to NATO Allies and warned that unless we employed "constructive ambiguity" to find a way forward, we could lose CFE. The meeting concluded with Russia reiterating an earlier call for a formal U.S.-Russia session during the week of September 21; Gottemoeller made no commitment, in light of the need for consultations in Washington and with Allies. End summary.

Ratification and Implementation -- Some common ground

¶2. (SBU) VCI A/S Rose Gottemoeller and Russian Disarmament Director Anatoliy Antonov held a three-hour "informal" discussion of CFE Treaty issues at the Russian mission in Geneva September 3. Gottemoeller and NSC Director Anita Friedt stressed the Obama Administration's readiness to think creatively to find a way forward on CFE and welcomed Russia's stated readiness, in its aide-memoire, to work on the basis of U.S.-drafted parallel actions package.

¶3. (SBU) Gottemoeller said she recognized that Russia wanted certainty about Allies' willingness to ratify Adapted CFE. She noted that Allies would not be able to ratify the Adapted Treaty unless Russia was implementing CFE: we needed to find a way ahead on these two issues simultaneously. Gottemoeller observed that Russia's aide-memoire of May 2009 on CFE, and the questions they had posed in capitals in July regarding possibilities for trial implementation or provisional application of Adapted CFE, had suggested a possible way forward.

14. (U) Before Gottemoeller could lay out her full concept, Antonov took the floor to raise again the question of provisional application. Why, he asked, couldn't the U.S. agree to provisional application of Adapted CFE, as we had done in 1992, when the original Treaty came into force. Gottemoeller said that it would be impossible for the U.S. to provisionally apply the Treaty before the Senate had given its consent. The U.S. team explained that in the 1992 context, the Senate had already given advice and consent to the Treaty. Antonov built on that, elaborating an idea he had voiced to Gottemoeller privately: could the U.S. and Allies agree to provisionally apply the Adapted Treaty if a large majority of key states had actually ratified? "What if perhaps 25 (of 30) states had ratified, including the U.S.? Would provisional application then be possible?" The U.S. team responded that it might well be possible in a circumstance where the Senate had already acted and all that remained was for a few treaty parties to complete their domestic procedures.

15. (C) Gottemoeller said the key, however, was to get to the point where the U.S. and Allies were in a position to ratify. Allies could not ratify unless Russia resumed implementation of CFE. She suggested that in the context of agreement between Russia and NATO on the issues in the parallel actions package, the U.S. could consider committing to complete ratification in a specific timeframe, just as had been done

STATE 00092527 002 OF 004

in the 1996 Flank Document, while Russia agreed to resume implementation of CFE for the same time frame. At the end of that period, the parties would convene an Extraordinary Conference to address questions relating to the future of the Treaty. If all CFE states had ratified and the Adapted Treaty had entered into force by the time of the Extraordinary Conference, we could begin the process of considering further updates; if not all CFE states had ratified, we would need to consider whether provisional application was possible, or whether other steps were necessary. Gottemoeller stressed that this was at this stage an informal idea; if Russia was interested we would raise it with Allies and discuss it formally in Washington.

16. (C) In response, Antonov initially rejoined that this was another U.S. proposal of "actions for promises." Russia would start implementing, and the U.S. would "consider" ratification. He inveighed against any notion that Russia would ever resume implementation of the current/current CFE Treaty, which he described as a Cold War relic that disadvantaged Russia. Gottemoeller explained that the U.S. and all CFE states had long since agreed that the original Treaty needed to be updated; this was why we had agreed on the Adapted CFE Treaty. There was no reason why we could not consider trial implementation of the Adapted -- vice the current -- CFE Treaty. All of the Adapted Treaty's provisions -- limitations, verification, and information -- were important, but in a trial period, we might be able to focus on those that were operational, such as the verification and data exchange provisions. She said that this would place a significant burden on those nations that were already implementing the current Treaty, since they would have extra work. But if Russia was interested, this was something we would consider. Somewhat mollified, Antonov agreed that Russia wanted assurance about NATO's commitment to ratification. He did not express opposition to the idea of trial implementation. CFE expert Anton Mazur asked specifically what provisions of Adapted CFE we would envision implementing on a trial basis. Data and inspections, but not limitations?

17. (SBU) Gottemoeller responded that the list of specific measures to be implemented would need to be negotiated; it was not set in stone. The idea was trial implementation of agreed provisions for a specified period, during which nations would ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty. Depending on what had been achieved by the end of that period, entry into

force or provisional application might follow.

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"It's not enough..."
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¶18. (U) Antonov expressed thanks for this U.S. thinking, then said simply "it's not enough. Ratification of Adapted CFE may have been enough at one point, but it is not enough now. Russia's concerns need to be addressed ... the flank sublimits that restrict where Russia can locate forces on its own territory must be abolished." With interjections from MOD CFE expert General Buzhinskiy, Antonov recounted the very strong views held by Prime Minister Putin regarding the flank limits.

¶19. (U) Gottemoeller responded that Russia was not the only nation that had strong views regarding the flank limits: these were critically important for a number of NATO Allies. This was an issue we could return to once the Adapted Treaty was in force, but if Russia insisted on abolition of the flank for Russia at this stage, that would be very problematic. Acknowledging the political importance of the flank limits for the U.S., because they are important to NATO Allies, Antonov pressed Gottemoeller to explain why the flank limits were essential for the U.S. from a military perspective.

¶10. (C) Gottemoeller said that Turkey and others in the region regard those limits as the core of the Treaty; those concerns had been heightened by events in Georgia in 2008. Buzhinskiy interjected that it was precisely because of Georgia that Russia could no longer tolerate the flank limits -- Russia needed to be prepared to defend its people and its friends. (Comment: in fact, Russia's military actions in Georgia in 2008 were not significantly restricted by the flank regime. Most of the hardware that Russia used in the conflict came from within the CFE flank zone. The CFE flank limits in the Adapted Treaty -- the only flank limits Russia

STATE 00092527 003 OF 004

has referenced as legitimate at any point since 1999 -- provide Russia with vastly more flexibility in the key equipment category (ACVs) than the original Treaty. End comment.)

¶11. (U) Gottemoeller said it was essential to handle this issue sensitively if we wanted to reach agreement on a package that would preserve the benefits of CFE. All parties would need to exercise a measure of "constructive ambiguity."

Russia's concerns need to be accommodated, Antonov insisted. Gottemoeller countered that Antonov should be patient and consider carefully whether there were issues we could use as ice breakers which would enable us to reach agreement on a package that preserves the Treaty and permits its further development.

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Other Issues
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¶12. (U) Several other elements of the parallel actions package were discussed in the course of the three-hour meeting and subsequent lunch:
-- Substantial combat forces: Antonov pushed hard for immediate discussion of a specific definition of the phrase "substantial combat forces:" he suggested that this might take place in Vienna at the JCG, or elsewhere. EUR/RPM Deputy Director Jennifer Laurendeau responded that while the U.S. was open to discussing this issue, the phrase was contained in the NATO-Russia Founding Act. This was an issue involving NATO and Russia; it was not a CFE (or JCG) issue, but had been included in the parallel actions package because Russia had said this was important. Antonov agreed that it was important, and urged that it be discussed, anywhere, between the U.S. and Russia or NATO and Russia. Buzhinskiy interjected that it was a CFE issue, since CFE is at the core

of the NATO-Russia Founding Act. The U.S. observed that commitments contained in the Founding Act had been predicated on the existence of a viable CFE Treaty.

-- Moldova: Antonov suggested (comment: more mischievously than seriously) that the March 18 statement by Medvedev, Voronin, and Smirnov on the Transnistria conflict obviated the need to address withdrawal of Russian forces from Moldova in the CFE context. Gottmoeller observed that there was a lot of common ground between Russia and the U.S. on the Moldova section of the parallel actions package, but that the devil was in the details.

-- Georgia: In a brief exchange over lunch, Laurendeau suggested that stabilizing measures relevant to the region (the context included Georgia and the flank) should be calibrated to address the obvious sources of security unease or concern: military equipment and personnel, military facilities (e.g., Georgia's concerns about Russian facilities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia), and generalized military transparency. Mazur observed that a regime for observation visits could address many of these issues at the same time. Buzhinskiy said that all these issues could be discussed. Antonov then discouraged further conversation without opposing any of these comments.

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Next Steps
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¶13. (U) Antonov urged that Gottmoeller and he meet in a formal session on CFE during the week of September 21. He also asked whether she envisioned moving quickly on an expanded meeting that would include Allies, as had been previously discussed. Gottmoeller said she thought options should be discussed for further meetings, including U.S.-Russian bilateral meetings and meetings involving Russia, the U.S. and a small group of interested Allies. Discussion was needed, but she did not commit to Antonov's proposed timeline. He asked that the U.S. be prepared to address substantial combat forces and the U.S. political and military rationale for retaining the flank at the next meeting. It was understood that they would need to return to Moldova and Georgia.

¶14. (U) Meeting Participants: In addition to A/S Gottmoeller and Ambassador Antonov, participants in the meeting included:

U.S.
NSCS - Anita Friedt

STATE 00092527 004 OF 004

VC/CCA - Richard Davis
EUR/RPM - Jennifer Laurendeau

Russia
MFA - Anton Mazur
MOD - Yevgeny Buzhinskiy, Yevgeny Ilin
FSB - Vladimir Venevtsev
CLINTON